



Public Authority for Consumer Protection

Social Media Policy

Version 1.0

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1) INTRODUCTION ABOUT AUTHORITY

Establishment of the Public Authority for consumer Protection comes as a major turning point in the history of Omani development looking forward to become a distinguished international experience and, at the same time, shining as the first financially and administratively autonomous government authority at Arab World level which is a status that lays on all of us a great responsibility to present this Omani experience in its peak.

Royal Decree No. 26/2011

Establishing the Public Authority for Consumer Protection (PACP)

1) Royal Decree No. 26/2011 Establishing the Public Authority for Consumer Protection.

We, Qaboos Bin Said, Sultan of Oman

After perusal of the Basic Law of the State, promulgated by the Royal Decree No. 101/96, and The Public Authorities and Organizations' Law, promulgated by the Royal Decree No.116/91, and in pursuance of the public interest

Have decreed as follows:

Article One: A public authority named "the Public Authority for Consumer Protection" shall be established. It shall have legal personality and enjoy financial and administrative autonomous.

Article Two: Dr. Said Bin Khamis Al-Kaabi shall be appointed chairman of this Authority in the special grade.

Article Three: A Royal Decree on the law of the Authority shall be issued subsequently.

Article Four: This Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and shall take effect as from the date of its publication.

Issued on : 24 Rabe'i Awal 1432 H., corresponding to: 28 February, 2011.

2) Royal Decree No. 53/2011, Promulgating the Law of the Public Authority for Consumer Protection.

We, Qaboos Bin Said, Sultan of Oman

After Perusal of the Basic Law of the State promulgated by The Royal Decree No.101/96, and The law of Public Authorities and Organizations, promulgated by the Royal Decree No. 116/91, and The Consumer Protection Law, promulgated by the Royal Decree No. 81/2002, and The Royal Decree No. 26/2011, Establishing the Public Authority for Consumer Protection, and In pursuance of the public interest,

Have decreed as follows:

Article One: The Public Authority for Consumer Protection shall be attached to the Council of Ministers subject to the enclosed Law.

Article Two: The Chairman of the Authority shall Issue the regulations and decisions necessary for the implementation of the provisions of the enclosed Law. And until such regulations and decisions are issued, the laws and regulations in force in connection with the units of the Administrative Apparatus of the State shall apply to what is not provided for in the enclosed Law to the extent that does not contradict its provisions.

Article Three: All the functions, appropriations and assets belonging to the Consumer Protection Department and its divisions in the governorates and regions shall devolve from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to the Authority. Also, all the employees of the Department shall be transferred to the Authority with their same grades.

Article Four: Whatever conflicts with or contradicts the enclosed Law and its provisions shall be repealed.

Article Five: This Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and shall take effect as from the date of its publication.

Issued on: 2 Jumada 1, 1432 H. , Corresponding to: 6 April, 2011

2) Objectives of the Authority

The objectives of the Authority as follow

1. To work for consumer protection from price fluctuations.
2. To monitor market prices of goods and services and curb their rise.
3. To guarantee consumer freedom of choice, equality, fair treatment, honesty and credibility.
4. To develop consumer general awareness and use proper scientific means to spread it on accurate and balanced bases in the society as a whole.
5. To find prompt solutions to consumer complaints.
6. To fight counterfeiting, swindling and monopoly.
7. To encourage establishment and support consumer protection societies.

To this end, the Authority shall:

1. Take appropriate measures to stabilize markets
2. Make consumer aware of misleading advertisements and the role of the Authority in fighting them
3. Receive complaints from consumers and consumer societies, investigate them and find appropriate solutions.
4. Continuously follow up commercial activities, monitor movement of goods and services and make sure of availability of basic goods.
5. Encourage fair competition, combat forfeiting and the monopoly harmful to the national economy.
6. Design action plans for the enhancement and protection of consumer rights.
7. Study the proposals and recommendations received in connection with consumer rights.
8. Make researches and studies on consumer protection.
9. Recommend suitable rules and regulations for market organization.
10. Work for the implementation of consumer protection laws and regulations.
11. Represent the Sultanate in regional and international conferences meetings related to its functions.

3) Social Media Policy

3.1 Policy statement

- 3.1.1) This policy is intended to help staff make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as blogs, wikis, social networking websites, forums, message boards, or comments on web-articles, such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Sabla Oman.
- 3.1.2) This policy outlines the standards we require staff to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which we will monitor your use of social media and the action we will take in respect of breaches of this policy.
- 3.1.3) This policy does not form part of any contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

3.2 Who is covered by the policy?

- 3.2.1) This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades, including senior managers, officers, directors, employees, consultants, contractors, trainees and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).

3.3 The scope of the policy

- 3.3.1) All staff are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of PACP and our services, employees and consumers.

3.4 Responsibility for implementation of the policy

- 3.4.1) The [Director of Media department] has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.
- 3.4.2) The [Head of electronic Media Section] is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimize risks to our operations.
- 3.4.3) All staff are responsible for their own compliance with this policy and for ensuring that it is consistently applied. All staff should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any breach of this policy should be reported to [Director of Media Department].

- 3.4.4) Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to [Principal Media Department].

3.5 Using social media sites in our name

- 3.5.1) Only the [Media Specialist & Head of Electronic Media Section] are permitted to post material on a social media website in our name and on our behalf. Any breach of this restriction will amount to gross misconduct.

3.6 Rules for use of social media

Whenever you are permitted to use social media in accordance with this policy, you must adhere to the following general rules:

- 3.6.1) Do not upload, post, forward or post a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.
- 3.6.2) Any member of staff who feels that they have been harassed or bullied, or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media website should inform [Director Human Resource Department]
- 3.6.3) Never disclose commercially sensitive, anti-competitive, private or confidential information. If you are unsure whether the information you wish to share falls within one of these categories, you should discuss this with [Director Media Department]
- 3.6.4) Do not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.
- 3.6.5) It is acceptable to quote a small excerpt from an article, particularly for the purposes of commenting on it or criticizing it. However, if you think an excerpt is too big, it probably is. Quote accurately, include references and when in doubt, link, don't copy.
- 3.6.6) Before you include a link to a third party website, check that any terms and conditions of that website permit you to link to it. All links must be done so that it is clear to the user that they have moved to the third party's website.
- 3.6.7) When making use of any social media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.
- 3.6.8) Do not post, upload, forward or post a link to chain mail, junk mail, cartoons, jokes or gossip.
- 3.6.9) Be honest and open, but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of us as an organization. If you make a mistake in a contribution, be prompt in admitting and correcting it.
- 3.6.10) You are personally responsible for content you publish into social media tools –

be aware that what you publish will be public for many years.

- 3.6.11) Don't escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations. Never contribute to a discussion if you are angry or upset, return to it later when you can contribute in a calm and rational manner.
- 3.6.12) If you feel even slightly uneasy about something you are about to publish, then you shouldn't do it. If in doubt, always discuss it with relevant department Director first.
- 3.6.13) Don't discuss colleagues, consumers or suppliers without their prior approval.
- 3.6.14) Always consider others' privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory e.g. politics and religion.
- 3.6.15) Avoid publishing your contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them, and never publish anyone else's contact details.
- 3.6.16) Before your first contribution on any social media site, observe the activity on the site for a while before launching in yourself to get a feel for the style of contributions, the nature of the content and any 'unwritten' rules that other contributors might follow.
- 3.6.17) Activity on social media websites during office hours should complement and/or support your role and should be used in moderation.
- 3.6.18) If you notice any content posted on social media about us (whether complementary or critical) please report it to [Director Media Department]

3.7 Monitoring use of social media websites

- 3.7.1) Staff should be aware that any use of social media websites (whether or not accessed for work purposes) may be monitored and, where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken under our HR Disciplinary Committee.
- 3.7.2) We reserve the right to restrict or prevent access to certain social media websites if we consider personal use to be excessive. Monitoring is only carried out to the extent permitted or as required by law and as necessary and justifiable for business purposes.
- 3.7.3) Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against you and us. It may also cause embarrassment to us and to our consumers/suppliers.
- 3.7.4) In particular uploading, posting forwarding or posting a link to any of the following types of material on a social media website, whether in a professional or personal capacity, will amount to gross misconduct (this list is not exhaustive):
 - 3.7.4.1) Pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a

sexually explicit or arousing nature);

- 3.7.4.2) a false and defamatory statement about any person or organization;
- 3.7.4.3) Material which is offensive, obscene, criminal discriminatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to us, our consumers or our staff;
- 3.7.4.4) Confidential information about us or any of our staff or suppliers (which you do not have express authority to disseminate);
- 3.7.4.5) any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil, and whether for you or us); or
- 3.7.4.6) Material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person.

Any such action will be addressed under the HR Disciplinary Action and is likely to result in summary dismissal.

- 3.7.5) If you notice any use of social media by other members of staff in breach of this policy please report it to [Director of Media department].

3.8 Monitoring and review of this policy

The Director Media Department will be responsible for reviewing this policy weekly to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

4) Implementation of the policy in Social Media Platforms

PACP media team is governed by social media policy which has been formulated by keeping authority objective & its function in place and at the same time realizing the dynamic culture and changing demand of consumers.

PACP Media Department shall

- a) Provides followers with support and basic professional services through creative activities in order to contribute to the development of electronic media.
- b) Endeavour to establish social media sites and high-level, professional, and institutional YouTube services.
- c) Aims at constructing suitable environment for application of electronic services and technical programs (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Sablat Oman Forum.)
- d) Upgrade work qualitatively and quantitatively, provide electronic services as fast and easy as possible, and keep abreast of modern technological developments in the community of informatics.
- e) Construct solid platform for social media sites where it can improve and shall rely on the services and high reach of information for the years to come.
- f) Introduce PACP news, and newspapers' articles interested in consumer affairs to the website daily as well as updating them according to rules and standards set out to ensure optimum quality of work and performance.
- g) Focus on monitoring social media sites, electronic services relating to the site, entering of electronic editorial issues, monitoring of interactive services such as consumers' responses and inquiries, follow-up of their remarks and providing them with solutions and legal measures required to solve the problems.
- h) Implement systems, programs and applications required to manage social media sites as per approved measures and schedules.
- i) Study of all complaints and suggestions and use them as means of improvement in our services and for consumers education and awareness.

List of social media platforms PACP is currently managing.

- 1) Facebook
- 2) Twitter
- 3) YouTube
- 4) Sablat Oman

The following sections will describe policy related to each social media platform.

4.1) FACEBOOK

Following tasks should be carried out to maintain PACP Facebook page.

- 4.1.1) Publish PACP news at the site in order to keep consumers constantly informed about latest developments.
- 4.1.2) Exhibit PACP findings and arrests in order to keep consumers aware of harmful items so that they may avoid them in future.
- 4.1.3) Publish articles of interest to consumers and dealing with their affairs.
- 4.1.4) Ask questions in statistical form in order to know the extent of awareness among consumers about purchases
- 4.1.5) Conduct surveys and provide sufficient time for the consumers to participate with relevant responses.
- 4.1.6) Give consumers chance to ask questions, submit inquiries and suggestions and make complaints.
- 4.1.7) Let consumers feel confident to ask questions and communicate directly through the Facebook by showing interest in their views, inquiries and complaints as well as submitting them to relevant concern, then answering immediately.
- 4.1.8) Provide high level of transparency and communicate objectively to resolve issues.
- 4.1.9) Prepare awareness bulletins in order to enhance consumers' knowledge.
- 4.1.10) Publishing of relevant YouTube videos for Consumer Awareness.
- 4.1.11) Publishing information about awareness sessions and orientation visits performed by PACP.
- 4.1.12) Providing information about Consumers' rights and obligations as specified by the law.
- 4.1.13) Refraining consumers from mentioning retailers name in the public in case of any issue/fine.
- 4.1.14) Preparing YouTube videos for merchants about their responsibilities regarding consumer rights and publishing it through Facebook
- 4.1.15) Provide flexibility for the consumers to interact privately with the agent through Facebook private messaging.
- 4.1.16) Ensure that Facebook page should follow PACP branding guidelines.

4.2) TWITTER

- 4.2.1) Entering PACP news and publishing PACP research and findings in the page in order to keep consumers informed about developments and harmful commodities so that they may avoid them as well as entering articles dealing with consumers' affairs by entering their links.
- 4.2.2) Conduct surveys and provide sufficient time for the consumers to participate with relevant responses.
- 4.2.3) Give consumers chance to ask questions, submit inquiries and suggestions and make complaints.
- 4.2.4) Let consumers feel confident to ask questions and communicate constantly with the Face Book by showing interest in their views, inquiries and complaints as well as submitting them to relevant authorities, then answering immediately.
- 4.2.5) Provide high level of transparency and communicate objectively to resolve issues.
- 4.2.6) Prepare awareness bulletins in order to enhance consumers' knowledge.
- 4.2.7) Publishing of relevant YouTube videos for Consumer Awareness.
- 4.2.8) Publishing information about awareness sessions and orientation visits performed by PACP.
- 4.2.9) Providing information about Consumers' rights and obligations as specified by the law.
- 4.2.10) Refraining consumers from mentioning retailers name in the public in case of any issue/fine.
- 4.2.11) Preparing YouTube videos for merchants about their responsibilities regarding consumer rights and publishing it through Facebook
- 4.2.12) Provide flexibility for the consumers to interact privately with the agent through private messaging.
- 4.2.13) Ensure that Twitter page should follow PACP branding guidelines.

4.3) SABLAT OMAN FORUM

- 4.3.1) Entering PACP news and publishing PACP research and findings in the page in order to keep consumers informed about developments and harmful commodities so that they may avoid them as well as entering articles dealing with consumers' affairs by entering their links.
- 4.3.2) Give consumers chance to ask questions, submit inquiries and suggestions and make complaints.
- 4.3.3) Let consumers feel confident to ask questions and communicate constantly with the page by showing interest in their views, inquiries and complaints as well as submitting them to relevant authorities, then answering immediately.
- 4.3.4) Provide high level of transparency and communicate objectively to resolve issues.
- 4.3.5) Refraining consumers from mentioning retailers name in the public in case of any issue/fine.
- 4.3.6) Observing consumer's privacy while publishing their questions.
- 4.3.7) Provide flexibility for the consumers to interact privately with the agent through private messaging.

4.4) YouTube

- 4.4.1) Publishing of relevant YouTube videos for Consumer Awareness.
- 4.4.2) Preparing YouTube videos for merchants about their responsibilities regarding consumer rights and publishing it through Facebook
- 4.4.3) Educating consumers about their rights and duties.

5) RESPONSE MECHANISM

- a) Continuous follow up on each social media site for new consumer inquiries or complaints.
- b) Direct response to inquiries relating to PACP such as phone numbers, regional offices locations and other repeated questions already answered.
- c) Submission of inquiries and questions to relevant personnel in order to provide relevant answers.
- d) Receive answers, reformulate them, and submit them to the relevant social media site.
- e) Reviewing Consumers views and suggestion and considering it to improve our services

Working Area	SCOPE of ACTIVITIES
Level 1 Support	Direct response to question about PACP functions and inquiries such as website URL, regional offices, phone numbers, other repeated questions already answered.
Level 2 Support	Question requiring legal answers to relevant departments (Complaints Department, Department of Market Monitoring and regulation, and the Legal Department) for answering as well as contacting regional offices for complaints from outside Muscat in order to take appropriate measures.
Level 3 Support	Response to some complaints and inquiries if relevant personnel are not present or if the matter required field visits, follow up, or case study.
Level 4 Support	Contact other relevant authorities (such as Ministry of Health, Municipality etc.,) for testing a product or checking a service then informing the consumer about the result which may require a few days/weeks for reviewing and concluding.

6) Resolution Time

LEVELS	RESOLUTION TIME	
	MIN.	MAX.
Level 1	20 Minutes	1 Hour
Level 2	2 Hours	4 Hours
Level 3	1 Day	4 Days
Level 4	Continuous contact with relevant authorities such as Ministry of Health, Municipality etc. for testing a product or checking a service then informing the consumer about the result which may require a few days/weeks for reviewing and concluding. (unlimited number of days)	